

ANG

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Editorial

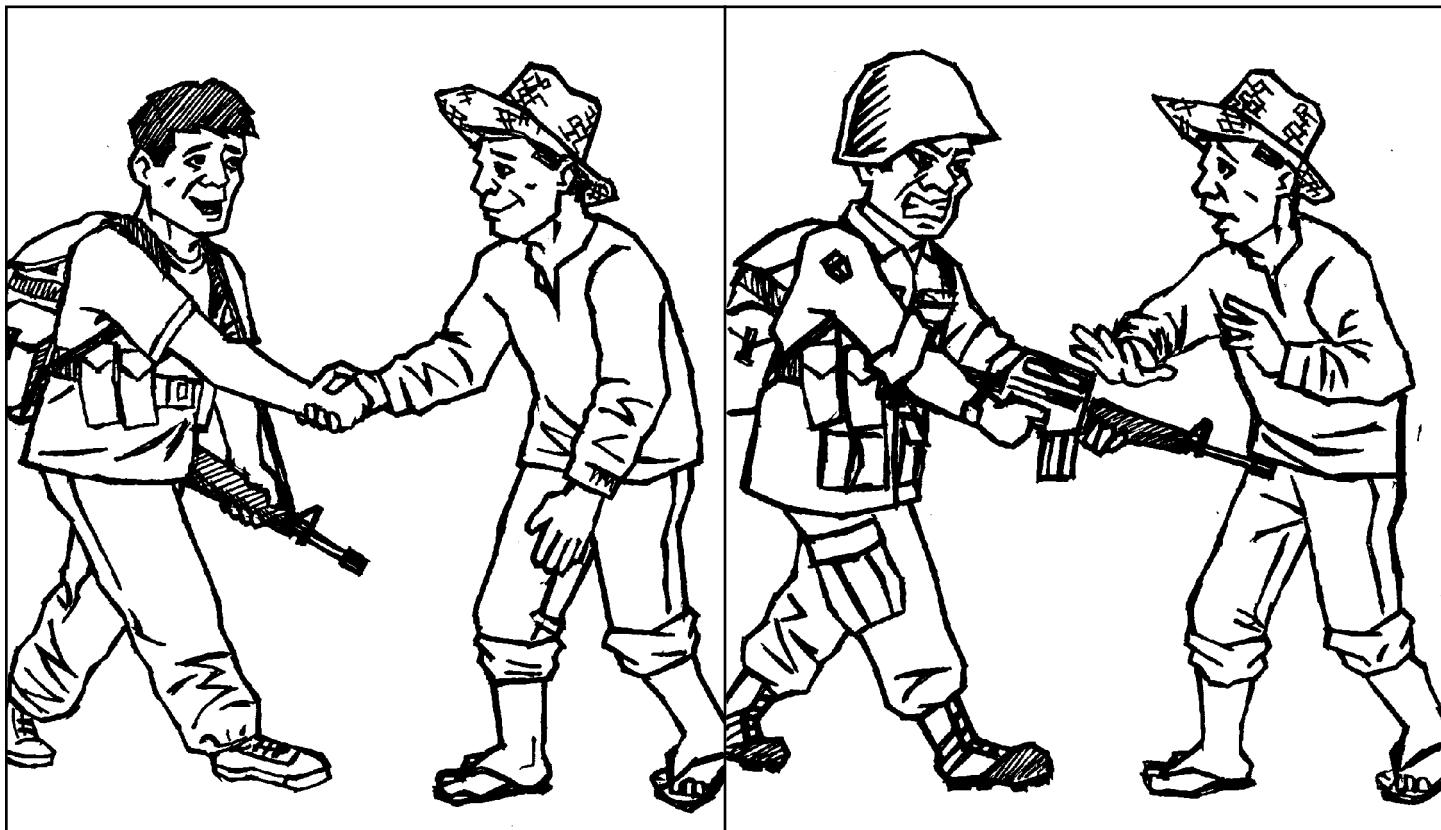
Who are the real terrorists?

No matter how much they distort the facts and call the revolutionary movement in the Philippines "terrorist," the glaring truth is that it is the Arroyo regime and its fascist troops who are the country's biggest terrorists and it is their master, the Bush government that is the world's Number One terrorist.

At least 1,400 families were forced to evacuate their homes in various villages in San Luis, Aurora in the last week of September due to the AFP's indiscrim-

inate bombing. The AFP claimed it was pursuing remnants of an NPA platoon in the area that had sustained heavy casualties after a firefight with the military. The AFP clearly had no other intention but to "shock and awe" civilians in the area because not a single encounter took place between the military and the NPA.

In Central Luzon, 19 progressive leaders and activists have already been killed by the armed forces of the state from September to October. Counting the



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number of victims since the Arroyo regime took power in 2001, at least 400 activists have already perished, and considerably many more have been illegally arrested, tortured, forcibly evacuated, and suffered other human rights violations. The victims were unarmed civilians.

In Moro communities, hundreds of thousands have been forced to evacuate due to indiscriminate bombing, cannon fire, summary executions, abduction, illegal searches and other violations of human rights amid AFP pursuit operations against MNLF forces, Abu Sayyaf bandits and other "terrorist groups." These marauding "anti-terrorist" operations, some of which were joined by American "advisers," had civilians as the actual victims.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, hundreds of thousands have already been victimized by bombings, strafing, indiscriminate firing, illegal detention, torture, widespread hunger and lack of basic services in the US' cruel occupation of their countries. Once again, the victims are defenseless civilians.

In stark contrast, the revolutionary forces have demonstrated

the highest respect for human rights and the conventions of war. Most people living in areas where the revolutionary forces operate know that one of the NPA fighters' main concerns in advancing armed struggle is to ensure the people's interests and welfare. The NPA only trains its weapons on definite and legitimate military targets. NPA policies on respecting and protecting civilians and enemy troops who have been rendered hors de combat are in complete accord with humanitarian laws and civilized rules of war.

The CPP and NPA through the NDFP have concurred with the Geneva Conventions and the Protocols of War whose provisions have likewise been incorporated into the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) signed by both the NDFP and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) in 1998. The CARHRIHL is disseminated and discussed in all CPP, NPA and NDFP units and among the masses under their leadership, and

CPP-NPA not terrorist—UNDP

Even the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) does not buy the the Arroyo regime and the US government's line of labeling the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the New People's Army (NPA) as terrorist.

The recently released 2005 Philippine Human Development Report (PHDR) published by the UNDP states that an objective analysis of the CPP-NPA's record and overall practice in advancing armed struggle would show that they do not engage in terrorism since they do not deliberately target civilians.

The 2005 PHDR was prepared with the assistance of the Human Development Network (HDN) and the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID).

The 2005 PHDR also assailed the Arroyo regime's "militaristic policy" as the main obstacle to the advance of peace negotiations. The report criticized the Arroyo regime for giving greater emphasis to military action instead of peace negotiations in dealing with the CPP-NPA which it regards more as terrorist than communist. It would rather toe the US line and seek its support for its total war against the revolutionary forces, said the UNDP.

As expected, both the US government and its puppet regime feigned innocence and ignored the report. They stated that they had no intention of striking the CPP and NPA off their "terrorist" listing. AB



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Arroyo regime's growing instability and worsening repressiveness

Gloria Arroyo has become more desperate in the face of growing calls to oust her from power. Despite her regime's fascist measures, protest actions continue without letup and anti-Arroyo alliances are expanding. In addition, rumors are flying thick about an alleged coup d'état being hatched by generals and a significant section of the armed forces. In the face of all this, Arroyo has stepped up repressive measures against the people, and especially against the progressive forces whom she considers the most influential elements in the ouster movement.

Most brutal of all is the regime's campaign to assassinate leaders and members of progressive

organizations. In Central Luzon alone, 19 mass leaders and activists have already been killed by the regime's armed minions in the last two months. They are among over 400 progressive leaders, activists and personalities murdered since 2001. The regime's fascist forces have likewise been launching a relentless campaign of brutality and terrorism in the countryside and in workers' and urban poor communities.

Arroyo has also intensified the suppression of protests and mass actions, especially in areas around Malacañang. She has concocted the so-called "calibrated preemptive response" (CPR) to justify the brutal dispersal of demonstrations along Mendiola, banned rallies near the presidential palace and has gone to the extent of clamping down on assemblies

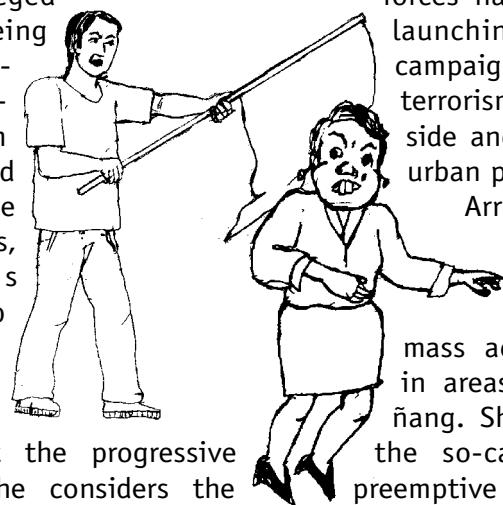
inside churches around it.

Malacañang has been transformed into a virtual garrison. That she has surrounded the palace with barbed wire and container vans and ordered the Presidential Security Battalion to stand guard outside with high-powered weapons and at least six armored personnel carriers and other military vehicles is symptomatic of Arroyo's grave fears.

The Arroyo regime has also relentlessly been threatening and pressuring the mass media. Aside from threatening to arrest critical broadcasters and commentators concomitant to a plan to declare a "state of national emergency," Malacañang reporters covering palace events have been placed under guard by the Presidential Security Group (PSG).

The mass media has not been spared from Arroyo's dirty attacks. This November, Arroyo accused well-known ABS-CBN broadcaster Julius Babao of bailing out Dawud Santos, an alleged terrorist. Instead of buckling under, however, mass media people have steadfastly defended their rights. Babao firmly denied Arroyo's accusation. ABS-CBN, mass media associations, politicians and other sectors have likewise strongly denounced Arroyo for hurling such charges despite an admission from the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (ISAFP) that they had no solid evidence against Babao. In spite of this, Malacañang refuses to apologize to Babao and his station.

Exposing the regime's corruption. The Citizens' Congress for Truth and Accountability (CCTA) was established on October 25



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is strictly complied with.

To date, however, only the NPA complies with the CARHRIHL and international laws of war. The NPA strives not to harm civilians in its tactical offensives. It consciously avoids launching offensives in areas that would greatly imperil civilians, disrupt their production activities and destroy important equipment. It humbly apologizes and offers compensation in the event that civilians are unintentionally harmed. The NPA ensures that all its forces treat captured enemy soldiers humanely.

On the other hand, the AFP rabidly retaliates against civilians whenever it suffers defeat in the hands of the NPA and intentionally stations troops in schools, barangay halls, chapels and other places of assembly to control the people's movements more strictly, subject them to further abuse and use them as human shields during encounters. There are countless cases of Red fighters rendered hors de combat who have been tortured and killed.

Who then are the real terrorists?

AB

through the cooperative efforts of progressive mass organizations, various church institutions, lawyers' associations, human rights advocates, congressmen and other respectable personalities to hear charges of electoral fraud, corruption and human rights violations against Arroyo. It has chosen former Vice President Teofisto Guignona to preside over its deliberations that are set to begin on November 8.

To serve as judges of the CCTA are Prof. Victoria Avena of the UP Law Center; Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz, secretary general of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP); Bishop Alberto Ramento, co-chairman of the Ecumenical Bishops Forum (EBF); Bishop Dan Balais of the Jesus Is Lord (JIL) Movement; Menchie Caragdag of Peace for Life; and former Presidential Commission on Human Rights (PCHR) official Nasser Marahomsalic. Meanwhile, United Nations ad litem judge Romeo Capulong, Atty. Neri Colmenares of the Counsels for the Defense of Liberties (CODAL) and Atty. Glenda Litong of the Alternative Law Group will be leading the panel of prosecutors that would be presenting evidence against Arroyo.

The people have high hopes that the CCTA hearings would disclose the truth that Arroyo suppressed when her paid allies in Congress killed the impeachment process. Although Arroyo strains to disparage the CCTA, Malacañang fears that the information to be disclosed in the CCTA would spur the people to take stronger and more determined action.

The Senate meanwhile continues to investigate various cases of plunder and anomalies involving the Arroyo regime, particularly Arroyo's diversion of funds earmarked for the Ginintuang Masaganang Ani (also called the "Fertilizer

Fund") for her electoral campaign in 2004. Former Sec. Emilia Boncodin of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has testified that the Arroyo government hastily distributed the entire Fertilizer Fund three months before the 2004 elections. Pro-Arroyo congressmen, town mayors and bogus non-governmental organizations set up by National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales received large allocations from this fund. Peasant organizations, meanwhile, disclosed that they did not receive any fertilizer or monies from the fund.

Shortly after Boncodin's disclosure from her hospital bed, a fire at the DBM office destroyed the main computer containing all important documents pertaining to the fund.

Worsening rifts in the ruling faction. The ruling faction is suffering from ever widening rifts, with a number of Arroyo's allies bickering openly that she should cut short her term as president. Two of her main allies in the Lakas-UMDP (United Muslim Democratic Party), namely Speaker Jose de Venecia and former president Fidel V. Ramos, are demanding that Arroyo end her term in 2007 in accordance with plans to shift from a presidential to a parliamentary system. The Senate, progressive forces and the broad masses are opposed to charter change.

Arroyo has repeatedly spurned suggestions for her to relinquish power in 2007. As a supposed concession, she has expressed readiness to call for parliamentary elections within the framework of a new constitution in 2007. At the same time, however, Malacañang has declared that she will remain president until 2010 even if a prime minister is elected. To make de Venecia toe her line, Arroyo has warned about the possibility of replacing him with Surigao del Sur

Despite her regime's fascist measures, protest actions continue without letup and anti-Arroyo alliances are expanding.

Rep. Prospero Pichay as House speaker. Pichay is a fiercely loyal Arroyo ally.

Meanwhile, rumors are rife about a Ramos-led coup where Ramos would hold real power and Arroyo would be retained as titular president. The US embassy has likewise disclosed that it was already aware of such rumors even before the "Gloriagate" scandal broke out. In a preemptive move, Malacañang has used Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, a Ramos foe, to disclose the former president's alleged coup plans this December.

Ramos has already complained about being monitored by the military on orders of Malacañang. Fearing open conflict with Ramos, the palace has consistently denied any knowledge about Ramos' coup plans and has strained to show that he remains a firm Arroyo ally. Ramos, on the other hand, has flatly denied having any coup plans, but has likewise not stopped dressing down Arroyo in public. People close to Ramos, however, admit the existence of an Arroyo-Ramos rift.

Aside from Ramos' group, Malacañang also suspects Gregorio Honasan and his cohorts in the Philippine Guardians Brotherhood Incorporated (PGBI) of hatching a coup d'état—a charge the PGBI denies.

Arroyo suffers even more sleepless nights worrying about rumors that her own presidential guards are actually involved or are being encouraged to join the planned coups.

AB



Masses' organized strength drives Palparan out of Eastern Visayas

It was the unified strength of the organized masses and the broad alliance of various sectors that exposed Brig. Gen. Jovito Palparan Jr. and drove out Gloria Arroyo's favorite fascist butcher from Eastern Visayas (EV).

Palparan left behind a bloody record of fascist violence in many areas of Eastern Visayas. Katungod-Sinirangang Bisayas (Katungod-SB) recorded 199 cases of various human rights violations in the region during Palparan's 86-day stint as chief of the 8th ID that began February 10. The violations include 22 cases of summary killings (the equivalent of seven per month) and 20 cases of abduction. There were also 36 victims of strafing, bombing and indiscriminate firing, 13 victims of torture, 16 victims of beatings and arbitrary arrest and 17 victims of arbitrary detention. Up to 979 persons were forcibly

evacuated from 21 communities in the towns of Calbiga, Tarangan, Motiong, Jiabong, Catbalogan and Paranas, all in the province of Samar.

The total number of human rights violations recorded in the first three months alone of Palparan's term already exceeded the 94 total recorded cases in 2004.

By the end of August, there were over 450 cases of human rights violations in the region.

It was the ferocity of fascist attacks in the region that spurred the people of Eastern Visayas in their numbers to expose intense militarization and demand the expulsion of Arroyo's man Palparan, the instigator of such fascist violence.

One of the most striking anti-Palparan mass struggles in EV was a successful march-rally on August 18 in Barangay Cancaiyas, Basey, Samar launched by at least

500 peasants from various barrios ravaged by intense militarization. Over a hundred delegates from the International Solidarity Mission (ISM) also attended the march-rally.

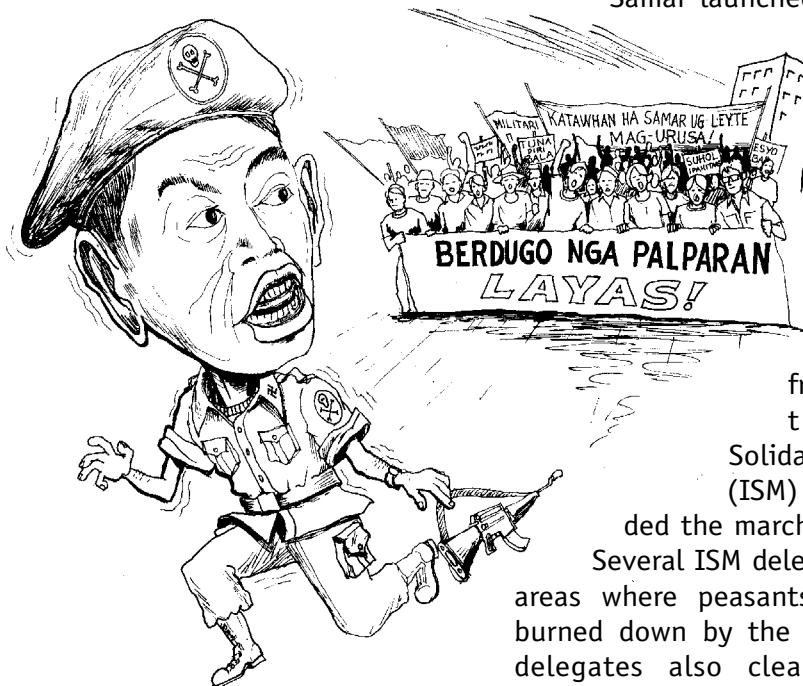
Several ISM delegates visited areas where peasants' huts were burned down by the military. The delegates also clearly saw for

themselves how the soldiers loitered about the streets of Cancaiyas without uniforms and how they took over and set up camp right in the barangay hall—in clear violation of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL).

Several weeks before this happened, more than 2,000 peasants from over 10 barrios camped out in front of Basey's municipal hall to denounce and oppose intense militarization, indiscriminate firing, the destruction of their crops, and other havoc wrought by the military. Many more would have joined the mass action had they not been blocked by military troops conducting operations.

The rallyists engaged officers of the 46th IB in a dialogue and demanded the ouster of the abusive unit. They were so angry that they beat up and kicked a soldier who posed as a civilian and infiltrated their ranks. They would've killed him too, had cooler heads not intervened. Under intense pressure, the military was forced to withdraw some of its men from the bigger barrios.

Farmers had also gathered in Paranas, Samar in June to denounce intense military abuses in several villages in Calbiga, Pinabacdao, Sta. Rita, Villareal, Basey, Motiong, Paranas, Jiabong, Catbalogan, San Jose de Buan, San Jorge, Gandara, Tarangnan, Calbayog, Matuguinao and Pagsangjan. ISM delegates who attended the gathering were unable to hear the testimonies of other peasants who





FASCIST STATE ON A RAMPAGE

were prevented from joining the activity by soldiers who threatened to shoot them if they did not return home. Nonetheless, what the delegates witnessed firsthand and the testimonies they heard from those who were able to come were sufficient for them to denounce the brazen violations of human rights and express incredulity as to why Arroyo continues to reward and promote the likes of Palparan.

The people's mass actions bore fruit because of their readiness and militancy to fight for their rights. The AFP's Reengineered Special Operations Team (RSOT) sent to the area at the same time the killings began failed to deceive the people who were already aware of Palparan's bloody record even before he was transferred to EV due to discussions previously held within their organizations on the national situation. Thus they were able to brace themselves for the military's intense attacks.

Intense human rights violations and vigorous propaganda and mass campaigns against these atrocities spurred other middle forces like church people, local

government officials, media people and congressmen to join the people's antifascist struggles. In an investigation conducted at the House of Representatives last May, congressmen from the various districts of Eastern Visayas, despite being victimized by grave threats themselves gave no quarter in questioning Palparan and other military and police personnel on the violence wrought by the AFP and PNP in the region. After hearing the witnesses' accounts, the congressmen from EV demanded Palparan's ouster from the region and stressed that they would block his promotion. Pastors of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) also condemned the series of killings, especially of church people active in progressive organizations. One of the victims was Katungod-Sinirangang Bisayas chair Rev. Edison Lapuz, who was murdered on May 12.

After their mobilizations, the people keenly studied their experiences and drew valuable lessons. They had broadened their understanding of the Arroyo regime's fascist character and reaffirmed the correctness of struggling for social change. Their experience has proven that comprehensively and systematically exposing every human rights violation and waging people's organized action are effective weapons that could put a stop to militarization and effect the expulsion of abusive units and officers.

Nonetheless, the people's struggle against the Arroyo-Palparan fascist tandem is far from over. Arroyo has pulled out Palparan from EV, but all she did was transfer him to Central Luzon. His killing spree has not only continued, but gained more mo-

mentum and his fascistic actions have been wreaking more havoc. Militarization and state terrorism likewise continue without letup in EV even after Palparan's transfer. In fact, Palparan's successor has vowed to perpetuate his fascist plans and complete the program laid out by Palparan and the Arroyo regime for the region.

Palparan is likewise as arrogant as ever. He is cocksure that once his victims' cries for justice falter, he will be promoted and enjoy the attendant privileges as a reward for his zeal and loyalty to the Arroyo regime.

More than ever, the struggling people and the revolutionary movement, along with all of Palparan's victims must step up exposés of the heinous crimes perpetrated by the Arroyo-Palparan fascist tandem. The vigorous and militant mass movement against the Arroyo-Palparan tandem already established in Southern Tagalog, Eastern Visayas and now in Central Luzon must be strengthened and expanded up to the national level. It is but just to hold Palparan and his masters accountable nationwide for their fascist crimes. We must also raise the level of people's mobilizations and preparedness in confronting the fascist tandem's intensified attacks and boost efforts to have them punished and have justice meted to their victims.

The people's blood will be shed for so long as Palparan and his ilk remain at the forefront of the regime's fascist machinery. The ruling regime and its fascist instruments must be meted revolutionary punishment and revolutionary justice must be enforced. Thus will the cries for justice of the victims of fascist violence nationwide be answered. AB





Violence and deception in Central Luzon

Ang Bayan recently interviewed NPA-Central Luzon spokesperson Jose Agtalon on the AFP's latest psywar campaign in the region, intensifying militarization especially in Aurora and Bataan, and the latest series of brutal and indiscriminate murders of progressive leaders and civilians especially since the butcher Palparan was deployed in the region.

Militarization and killings have long been intensifying in Central Luzon. After the series of assassinations of progressive leaders and civilians in Southern Tagalog began in 2001, the fascist Arroyo regime launched a second series of murders beginning with its attack on striking mill and farm workers in Hacienda Luisita last year. Next came the successive assassinations of other leaders, members and allies of the struggling masses and progressive organizations in Tarlac, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga and many other areas in Central Luzon. There is currently no letup in militarization and in AFP and police attacks against the people in the region. A campaign of defamation and lies is likewise simultaneously being waged by Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) officials based in Tarlac.

Nineteen leaders and members of progressive organizations have already been killed by the AFP's butchers in Central Luzon since Palparan was deployed in the region on September 2. The murders have been accompanied by relentless militarization, abductions, torture and the forced evacuation of ordinary civilians.

One of the latest in a long and bloody list of violence perpetrated in the region by the ruling classes' state and fascist forces is the murder of Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labor Union (CATLU) president Ricardo Ramos on October 25 in Barangay Mapalacsiao, Tarlac City. Ramos was then in his house cele-

brating with other union members because the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) had just issued a decision ordering the Cojuangco family to grant the workers backpay for all the days they have been on strike.

The following day, BAYAN-Angeles City president Francisco Rivera was murdered in Barangay Pulong Bulo. Two of his other companions, Dr. Angel David and Von John Maniti, were also killed. Witnesses said that after shooting down the victims, the gunmen approached Rivera's body sprawled on the pavement and shot him again at close range.

At around 5 p.m. that same day, Federico de Leon, president of the Pinagkaisang Samahan ng Tsuper at Operatory Nationwide (PISTON-Bulacan) and head of Anakpawis-Bulacan, was also shot dead at close quarters.

Before this, Palparan's men had already killed six local leaders of progressive organizations, among them Bayan Muna-Tarlac secretary general Florante Collantes, who was shot on October 15 in front of his store in Tuec, Tarlac; Anakpawis-Cuyapo municipal coordinator Roldano Mariano, who was shot in front of his wife inside his home in Cuyapo, Nueva Ecija on October 2; Bulacan-Anakpawis officer Leogracio Punzal, who was shot while painting his store in Norzagaray, Bulacan on September 12; Anakpa-

wis-Nueva Ecija leader Prescilla Esteban, who was abducted on October 2 and found dead in Guimba, Nueva Ecija on October 5; and Guimba peasant leader Renier Cusio, who was seized and found dead in Cabanatuan City on September 13.

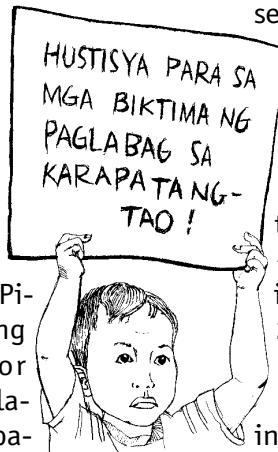
Aside from them, six ordinary civilians were also killed just because they helped progressive organizations in some way or were simply suspected of having links with the revolutionary movement. Among them are Roman Friola of Lupao, Nueva Ecija who was shot on September 25 while talking to suspected members of the NPA and Elmer Rufino of Orani, Bataan who was shot because he

served as driver during a fact-finding mission conducted by KARAPATAN in Barangay Tala, Orani on September 25.

KARAPATAN was investigating the latest series of human rights violations in Bataan wrought by the 24th IB's military operations in the area.

The 24th IB has been indiscriminately committing violent acts in several sitios of Tala, Orani, Bataan in recent months. Up to 30 families were forced to evacuate from Sitio Kilahigan in Tala, Orani after a series of killings of their fellow villagers. Several days before, elements of the 24th IB had warned that many of the barriofolk were included in the order of battle. Among those killed was Jose Levimar Rieza who was shot while sleeping peacefully simply because his father was suspected of being an NPA supporter. Villagers Mario Tuvera, Tomas Paras and two Aeta minorities were also abducted and murdered.

AB





Palparan then

There is nothing new about Palparan's bloody record in Central Luzon. Even before he was assigned to Southern Tagalog where he gained a reputation nationwide as the Arroyo regime's leading assassin, Palparan had already unleashed terror in Central Luzon.

Palparan was first assigned in Central Luzon as commander of the 24th IB in 1987. From then up to 1991, he unleashed rampant violence in the region. Many human rights violations like illegal arrests, detention, torture, forced evacuation and the destruction of the lives of many activists and members of progressive organizations as well as ordinary citizens were reported alongside many of the military operations that his battalion carried out.

Palparan is also known to have founded vigilante groups in Pampanga, such as the Angelo Simbulan Brigade then based in San Fernando and the Faustino Sabile Brigade in Mabalacat. These death squads carried out summary executions and other killings, torture and other heinous crimes against the people. Among their victims were human rights advocates Atty. Ramon Cura, Dr. Patricio Santiago Jr., and Archie Simbulan, a Dr. Dabu, and union leaders Raul Quiroz and Simplicio Aninion. Two activists, Badjo Conrado and Corazon Lintag, were abducted and remain missing to date. **AB**

Psywar campaign in Aurora

The Domingo Erlano Command of the New People's Army in Aurora vehemently belied claims by the 48th IB that it had laid siege to a large NPA camp in Sitio Alasanay, Barangay Dimanayat in San Luis, Aurora on September 28. According to the tall tales of its chief Col. Joselito Kakilala, elements of the 48th IB allegedly caused a platoon of Red fighters to retreat as they entered the camp. A five-hour battle reportedly led to the death of three Red fighters and the seizure of several pieces of military equipment. The AFP continued its "pursuit operations" against alleged "guerrilla remnants" for more than two weeks.

Aside from soldiers of the 48th IB, the 71st Recon Coy and Philippine Air Force elements also played roles in the drama. Newly appointed 7th ID chief Brig. Gen. Jovito Palparan directed the grand production in Aurora.

The AFP forces actually carried out bombing and strafing in over 10 barrios of San Luis and Baler. But the stories about encounters were sheer fabrication.

The NPA camp that the military had allegedly entered in Alasanay had been abandoned for over a year. They confiscated nothing from it except some old and damaged equipment. Claims about encounters were but part of the AFP's pretexts to further militarize the area.

The 48th IB lorded it over the area throughout the entire production. It strictly forbade residents in several adjacent barrios from leaving their respective homes, stopped bancas

from plying products in and out of the villages and prohibited peasants from going to their swidden farms. Soldiers burned huts of rattan gatherers in the nearby forests. Over 1,400 families went hungry due to such restrictions.

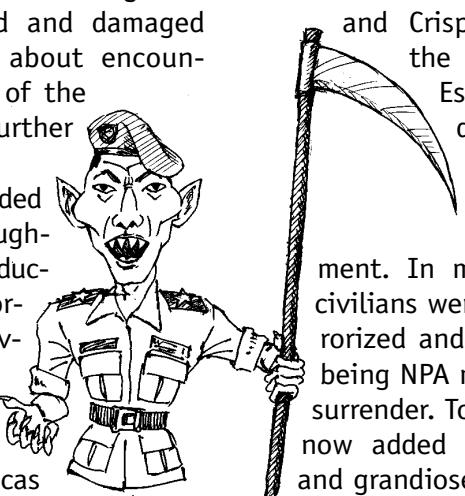
The AFP set up checkpoints in the main streets and town centers. It ignored the authority of local government and strictly monitored the movements of local officials and human rights advocacy groups in the barrios. Soldiers threatened the Peace Mission composed of church people and relief workers that entered the area.

The 48th IB also tried to implicate Rep. Satur C. Ocampo and other known leaders of progressive organizations in the province in the fabricated encounter by claiming that it had found letters in the camp that said that a "Ka Satur" had given ₱5 million to purchase explosives. The bombs would supposedly be used by the NPA to unleash terror in Metro Manila at the height of mass mobilizations against Arroyo.

The 48th IB had already unleashed violence in the past against the people of Aurora. The people have not forgotten the abduction and brutal murder of Cocoy Verances

and Crispin Amazona and the disappearance of Esteban Pastor—ordinary civilians accused of involvement in the revolutionary move-

ment. In many other cases, civilians were beaten and terrorized and those accused of being NPA members forced to surrender. To this, the AFP has now added fabricated stories and grandiose psywar. **AB**



Hold US imperialism accountable!

Various sectors strongly denounced the brutality inflicted by six American soldiers on a Filipina in Olongapo City on November 1. No less than the driver of their rented van testified how one of the soldiers raped the woman while the others cheered him on. He also witnessed how the soldiers callously dumped the victim along the side of the road. US embassy officials quickly hid the six servicemen and worked on the driver to make him reverse his original statement. They have also been pushing the victim to agree to settle the matter out of court. Meanwhile, the possibility of a whitewash has grown as the puppet Arroyo regime has made a show of pursuing justice even as it defended US military presence in the country. The six American soldiers were participants in joint military exercises under Balikatan 2005.

This case is but one of the heinous crimes committed by American soldiers against the Filipino people. In 1987, Heinrich Ritter, a soldier then stationed at the US military base in Subic raped and mercilessly abused 12-year-old Rosario Burgos Baluyot in Olongapo City. Instead of making him pay for his crime, American officials immediately spirited Ritter out of the country. Rosario died from a severe infection after a few days. Up to 82 cases of sexual abuse were committed by American soldiers against women aged 16 and older before the Senate junked the Military Bases Agreement (MBA) in 1991. Fifteen cases of rape were

also committed against children.

Aside from assailing these crimes, the Filipino people have also denounced the puppet Arroyo regime and regimes before it for allowing the presence of American troops which have brazenly trampled the country's sovereignty. As in other parts of the world, the presence of American troops goes hand in hand with various crimes and other violations of human rights.

From the very start, the people have called for the abrogation of

Philippine laws.

Progressive parties and organizations filed a complaint in 2002 against US intervention and abuse by American troops in Basilan—dubbed by US imperialism as the so-called "second front of terrorism." Bayan Muna condemned the shooting of Buyong-Buyong Isnijal in his own home in Basilan on July 24, 2002 by an American soldier who joined pursuit operations conducted by Filipino soldiers—which by itself was a violation of VFA provisions prohibiting the presence of American troops in AFP military operations.

That same year, the VFA Commission filed in Congress cases of human rights violations committed during the joint exercises, including the forced evacuation of Aeta minorities as a result of the indiscriminate bombing of their communities.

Other cases involving American soldiers were also reported, such as the mauling of a taxi driver in Cebu, the killing of a fisherman in Zambales,

and bombings that resulted in the death of some youths in Cebu.

American soldiers have also conducted unilateral military exercises several times—in violation of VFA provisions stating that they must always be accompanied by Filipino soldiers in their "exercises."

American troops have a long and bloody record of intervention and arrogance in the country. It is but fitting to continue exposing the violations of national sovereignty and the crimes perpetrated as a result of their presence. **AB**



all agreements allowing the presence of American troops in the country. The latest of these is the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) which allows the US armed forces to enter and leave any part of the Philippines at will. The VFA opened the door wide open to armed intervention by American troops in all corners of the country and gave American soldiers the freedom to violate the people's human rights with impunity. Under the VFA, the reactionary government may choose to waive its right to try American soldiers who violate

Added burden, added opposition

RA 9337 or the VAT Reform Act was implemented November 1 after the Supreme Court issued its final decision on October 18 declaring with a vote of 15-0 that the law was constitutional.

Contrary to Malacañang's claims, the new law will bring nothing but more suffering to a people already mired in intense crisis. It comes as an even greater burden to a people already badgered by continuously rising prices of basic goods and services even before the new VAT took effect.

RA 9337 expanded the list of items covered by the 10% VAT to include, among others, electric services, petroleum products, plane and boat fares, and medical and legal services.

Higher prices, added burden.

Because of the 10% VAT, Meralco raised electricity charges by 58 centavos per kilowatt-hour (kWh) or ₱118.44 for those consuming 200 kWh per month. Meanwhile, charges have also gone up by ₱13.74 for those consuming 1 kWh to 50 kWh per month. Those consuming 70 kWh per month will be shelling out ₱25.75 more, and an additional ₱46 will be paid by those whose monthly consumption exceeds 100 kWh. The new charges will take effect this November, although consumers will only be able to see the actual increases and how these were arrived at in their December bills.

The price of diesel is set to rise by 93 centavos per liter, while unleaded gasoline will increase by a resounding ₱3.40 per liter. (This as yet excludes the ₱2.50 per liter increase that oil companies claim they have to impose to recover lost income.)

Each 11-kilo tank of liquefied

petroleum gas (LPG) now costs ₱486 to ₱510, with over ₱100 added to its previous price.

In a supposed bid to mitigate the VAT's effect on prices of petroleum products, Malacañang issued Executive Order 440 which reduces tariff and excise taxes on oil imports. But this will only reduce the taxes paid by oil companies, and thus increase their earnings. Definitely, not a single centavo of this will accrue to the people and provide them any kind of benefit.

Prices of certain food and beverage items, such as coffee, chocolate drinks, sugar, vegetables and biscuits, among others, have also gone up.

Airplane and boat fares are also set to rise. Meanwhile, bus fares for certain routes have already gone up. Hospitals and doctors, lawyers and other professionals will also be charging bigger fees.

Soon after the Supreme Court finalized RA 9337, the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX), the Manila-Cavite Coastal Road, South Luzon Expressway (SLEX), Skyway and the Southern Tagalog Arterial Road (STAR) also immediately raised their charges.

Lies. The administration has concocted all sorts of explanations to deceive the people into believing that EVAT would benefit them. Income from the new taxes would supposedly wipe out the government's budget deficit by 2008. It would supposedly help defray the over ₱1 trillion budget for 2006 and ₱15 billion would

allegedly be earmarked for salaries of government employees. In addition, the tax revenue would supposedly be used to modernize agriculture, build infrastructure and deliver social services.

Contrary to the regime's drum-beating that the collected VAT would benefit the people, additional taxes were imposed on orders of imperialist institutions mainly to ensure payment of the government's debts to international banks. The World Bank has likewise dangled before Arroyo a \$1.8 billion loan in exchange for the

VAT's implementation. The country's international creditors also ordered the regime to implement VAT to maintain the Philippine government's creditworthiness and enable it to continue borrowing.

Arroyo will also be using the additional revenues from VAT to fund her bid to cling to

power through various political maneuvers, surveilling her opponents and plotting against them, greasing the palms of her allies and bribing others to side with her. Out of the ₱1 trillion proposed budget for 2006, she will have access to over ₱234 billion in "pork barrel" funds for Malacañang and local governments in addition to funds from other schemes under Malacañang's direct control. This is aside from PAGCOR, PCSO and other huge funds also under Malacañang's jurisdiction and beyond the purview of the national



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Mindanao offensives yield 26 firearms, kill 28 armed elements

THE New People's Army (NPA) in Mindanao seized 26 firearms, including 23 high-powered rifles and killed 28 armed elements in 41 tactical offensives from September 20 to October 30. Thirty-one soldiers were also wounded in these firefights. A CAFGU was also captured in action by the NPA but released shortly afterward. On the other hand, two Red fighters were martyred and seven wounded.

In its latest offensive, the NPA blew up two six-wheeler trucks carrying about 20 soldiers from the 36th IB in Sitio Sian, Barangay Maharlika, Bislig City at around 6:30 in the morning of October 30. Two soldiers were killed and four were wounded, according to initial reports. The Northeastern Mindanao Regional Operational Command said the explosives were detonated only two kilometers from the 36th IB's company headquarters in Scaling Station, PICOP, Bislig City.

Prior to this, the NPA had just raided the Philippine Army and CAFGU detachment in Sitio Tandawan, Bigaan, Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur on October 28. The Red fighters overran the detachment after an hour-long firefight and seized three M14s, two Garands, 492 bullets of assorted caliber, a grenade, 11 packs, eight uniforms, 12 pairs of boots, six M14 magazines and 19 Garand clips.

In a statement, National Democratic Front-Mindanao spokesperson Jorge "Ka Oris" Madlos said that among the objectives of the recent tactical offensives of the NPA were to weaken the reactionary government's armed strength and strengthen the Red army. Out of the 43 encounters that occurred in Mindanao in the last five weeks, 41 were initiated by the NPA and only two were initiated by the AFP, PNP and CAFGU. **AB**

NPA seizes 5 high-powered arms from annihilated RPA gang

A five-man NPA partisan team seized five high-powered firearms and killed four elements of the bandit Revolutionary Proletarian Army (RPA) in the afternoon of November 1 in Sitio Camachili, Barangay Dolis, Calatrava, Negros Occidental. Among those killed was gang leader Eleuterio Lumanat alias Ongkoy. Another RPA element was seriously wounded.

Confiscated from the RPA gang members were two M16s, an M14, a Garand, an M203 grenade launcher and ammunition. The RPA members were having a drinking bout when they were attacked.

The RPA founded by Arturo Tabara is a bandit group that poses as a revolutionary army and sells its services as hired killers and armed goons to big compradors and landlords like Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco. The RPA surrendered and signed an agreement with the Estrada government in December 2000 and since then has become a rabid partner of the military and police in campaigns against the revolutionary forces. RPA personnel have been implicated in many cases of murder, robbery and rape. **AB**

"Caravan for Justice" launched in Panay

A Luksang Bayan (people's memorial) or "Caravan for Justice" led by the Panay Alliance-KARAPATAN and the Mothers and Relatives Against Tyranny (MARTYR) was launched on October 29-30 across Panay island. The caravan was held to honor Panay's sons and daughters killed in the struggle for freedom from the time of the US-Marcos dictatorship up to the current Arroyo regime.

The caravan began October 29 in Iloilo City and stopped in Belison, Antique; in Kalibo, Aklan; and in Roxas City in Capiz where it was joined by relatives and friends of the martyrs the caravan paid tribute to. It ended October 30 with a program held in Plaza Libertad in Iloilo where the caravan began.

The Luksang Bayan honored nearly 400 heroes and martyrs of Panay, among them peasant leader Valeriano Caro, antifascist leader Evelio Javier, poet and composer Jose Percival Estocada Jr., and former College Editors Guild of the Philippines president Antonio Tagamolila.

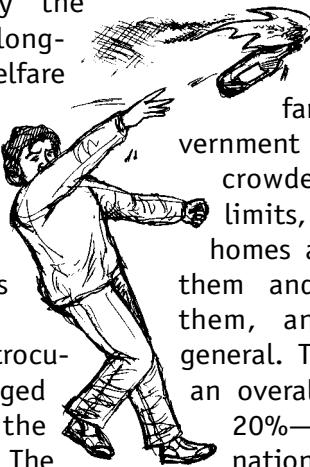
Amid commemorating the martyrs' courage and unflinching sacrifice, Panay Alliance-KARAPATAN strongly condemned the rampant killings of progressive leaders and activists in Central Luzon, tackled the Arroyo regime's oppression and repression of the broad masses of the people and called for its ouster.

The annual Luksang Bayan was first held in the latter years of the Marcos dictatorship to demand justice for the victims of summary executions by the reactionary military. According to MARTYR, the caravan stops at certain places to renew links with relatives of heroes and martyrs in various areas of Panay and with the people as a whole. A monument that serves as a memorial to the martyrs' heroism was built in Plaza Libertad last year. **AB**

Youth rebellion rocks France

A spontaneous youth rebellion has been raging for almost two weeks now in contiguous communities around the French capital of Paris. The rebellion waged by thousands of youth angered by the French government's long-term neglect of their welfare and by the deprivation of their rights and access to services exploded and continues to spread just a few miles from the streets surrounding the city.

The death by electrocution of two teenagers aged 15 and 17 sparked the intense youth rebellion. The teenagers had hidden themselves in a power plant out of fear from pursuing police forces. The uprising began in Clichy-sous-Bois, a Paris



community mainly populated by migrants from North and Central Africa. The rebellion and violence quickly spread to similar communities north, south and east of Paris teeming with hundreds of thousands of migrant workers and their families. The French government has crammed them into crowded areas outside city limits, housed them in rundown homes and buildings, oppressed them and discriminated against them, and neglected them in general. These communities suffer an overall unemployment rate of 20%—more than double the national average of 9.8%. The unemployment rate among children of migrants aged 21-29 is also higher than the national average of 23%. Those who do have jobs

receive wages that are 75% lower.

The migrant youth's seething anger intensified when the French government branded and treated them as "scum" and poured several thousand policemen into their communities instead of addressing their demands. Even before the uprising, French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy had already used an iron fist policy in these communities in the name of an anticrime campaign.

In an expression of anger, growing numbers of youth groups have been burning down vehicles, factories, schools and other establishments every night. The latest reports said that almost 5,000 vehicles have been burned, aside from establishments. The police, on the other hand, have already arrested up to 1,200 youth.

Bush fails in bid to set up biggest free trade zone

US President George W. Bush failed to establish the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in the Caribbean and Latin America amid strong objection from a number of key leaders and widespread people's protests in the region. Bush pushed for the FTAA at the Summit of the Americas held at Mar del Plata, Argentina on November 4 and 5.

Leaders of Brazil, Venezuela and other opposing countries said the FTAA would only open their economies to unrestrained plunder by US monopoly corporations and merely intensify the widespread poverty already being suffered by their respective countries. Instead of the FTAA, these countries' leaders said they favored the establishment of a trade zone in the region with "socialist features" that would ensure the welfare of all participating countries.

Latin Americans launched an alternative People's Summit from November 1-5 to coincide with Bush's Summit of the Americas. Up to 600 organizations and movements joined the People's Summit, where delegates strongly denounced Bush's imperialist policies and encouraged their leaders to reject US imperialist dictates. They greeted Bush with protests during his arrival in Argentina on November 4. Up to 20,000 Argentines poured out into the streets, burned US flags, and called on the people to oppose US imperialism's "globalization" policies and wars of aggression. Simultaneous protests were also held in Brazil, Venezuela and Uruguay.

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budget.

The regime's deception is truly infuriating. It tries to hoodwink a people already fully aware of how the president's economic policies have made their lives miserable. Arroyo inveigles the people into having faith in her despite her countless crimes, which, among other cases of corruption, include raiding the country's coffers to fund her election.

Added opposition. Arroyo's VAT is added reason why she must be ousted from power. She has done nothing but depress the people's economic status even more. All she has done is to work for her welfare as well as that of her cohorts and imperialist masters. The people must unite and be painstaking in their efforts to oust Arroyo from power. AB